improved until today the Hawiaan hybrid, as you received it, is "a thing of beauty and a joy forever"; but as a parent, it is unpredictable.

At this point you are probably wondering how so many old timers in the hibiscus-show-flower hobby manage to carry on their work, and produce such exotic blooms from a minimum of crosses. Here I believe the answer lies in the fact that these people have had many years in the hobby and have gradually limited their crosses to a few hybrids, mostly of their own origination - hybrids on which they have a history of several generations. They know the dominant characters of each and thus are reasonably able to gauge the result obtainable by crossing within their own special group. In fact, one who is close to the hobby learns to recognize by sight the hybrids of the various hybridizers, for each seems to have an individual "signature" expressed in color, form, or other characteristics.

This, of course, is not a scientific approach; in the sorry absence of any sustained interest in hibiscus hybridization by scientifically trained people working under authoritative sponsorship, most of the hybridization effort has been made by amateurs. Unfortunately, most of our work has resulted in localized forms or show types. What is needed today is institutional interest in breeding hibiscus with the objective of developing hardier cultivars that have a wide geographical range and are suitable for both garden and landscape planting.

In recent years, this has been the goal at the Los Angeles State and County Arboretum. Our project, in which we grow and observe from one thousand to three thousand seedlings each year, has been approaching this objective by centering interest primarily on the true species and the old forms of H. rosa-sinensis. This program goes back to the earliest crosses in hibiscus history; we are, in effect, trying to "unscramble" H. rosa-sinensis, and further, to learn

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more about the several true species. In this way it is believed that we can more effectively develop hardiness and other desired characteristics, such as prolific bloom. Improved flower form and color will come later. Already we have many vigorous seedlings with reasonably good bloom even by show standards, some of them first-generation crosses between species and forms of H. rosa-sinensis. I could give you some preliminary observations as regards parental influence in such crosses; but these would be of no value to you, as they would not apply to the hybrids with which you are working.

In this connection, I do hope that you will not "go overboard" on show types. The New South Wales and Queensland coastal region where you plan to locate eventually, is in my opinion an ideal area for the highest development of the flower as a landscape plant as well as a specialty. I think you could benefit by the realization, as we have, that while Hawaii is best known for its exotic show blooms it is the F_1 and F_2 hybrids of early crosses made in Hawaii between the native H. arnottianus and H. rosa-sinensis that are, with common red, the most widely-planted varieties in all parts of the world where ornamental hibiscus can be grown outdoors. I refer to 'Agnes Gault' 'Kona' ('Mrs. Rose Davis'), and 'Lillian Wilder' ('Apple Blossom'). Hibiscus arnottianus is also widely planted under the name of 'Wilder's White,' in Australia and South Africa.

I know that I have not given you any specific answers; but with the background above, you will realize that a specific answer is not possible. A little later, when you receive more of the Hawaiian hybrids and some of ours, I will tell you of the dominant characters of those with which I have worked. But only by recording your own crosses and your own observations faithfully, will you eventually be able to produce results that will please you.

Sincerely,
Ross H. Gast